

REMARKS

Claims 1-5 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 3-5 are amended.

Claims 3-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. By this Amendment, claims 3-5 have been amended as suggested in the Office Action. Claim 5 is now clear and definite. The claim 5 amendments are supported by page 39, lines 15-21 and Fig. 12, for example. It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Bauer, U.S. Patent No. 5,082,310. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Bauer fails to disclose a trim member with a door hinge portion protecting plate disposed below and separate from the air bag door portion, as recited in claim 1. Bauer also fails to disclose a trim member with at least one of the force concentrating means positioned below and separate from the air bag door portion and adjacent to a lower surface side of the air bag door portion, as recited in claim 2.

Page 3 of the Office Action asserts that the upper door portion 28 and the lower door portion 30 of Bauer are disposed below and separate from the upper door 20 and the lower door 22. Applicant respectfully submits that the Office Action's assertion is not correct, and demonstrates a misunderstanding of Bauer.

Bauer discloses a closure 16. The closure 16 includes an upper door 20 and a lower door 22 that can separate along a seam 24 (col. 4, lines 14-16). The closure 16 also includes a one-piece substrate member 26 having an upper door portion 28 and a lower door portion 30 connected along the seam 24 (col. 4, lines 23-26). The substrate member 26 is enclosed in a mass of foamed plastic 34 having layers extending over and under the opposite side of the substrate member 26 and a gap 33 of the seam 24 (col. 4, lines 29-32).

As such, when Bauer refers to the upper door 20, Bauer is referring to the upper door portion 28 of the substrate member 26 that extends from the seam 24 and the foamed plastic 34 that surrounds the upper door portion 28. Similarly, when Bauer refers to the lower door 22, Bauer is referring to the lower door portion 30 of the substrate member 26 that extends from the seam 24 and the foamed plastic 34 that surrounds the lower door portion 30.

The Office Action asserts that a groove 66 (i.e., tear portion) is formed in the upper door 20 and the lower door 22. Applicant respectfully submits that the Office Action's assertion is not correct. In Bauer, a skin layer 38 (which includes the groove 66 (col. 5, lines 28-30)) is wrapped and bonded in position overlying the outside layer of foam plastic 34 deposited over both the upper door 20 and the lower door 22 (col. 4, lines 33-37). As such, Bauer does not consider the skin layer 38 to be a part of the upper door 20 and the lower door 22. Bauer instead considers the skin layer 38 to be a cover for the upper door 20 and the lower door 22. Furthermore, nowhere is it disclosed or suggested in Bauer that the skin layer 38 alone forms an air bag door portion.

Accordingly, Bauer fails to disclose a door hinge portion protecting plate disposed below the air bag door portion, as recited in claim 1, and a force concentrating means positioned below the air bag door portion, as recited in claim 2. Bauer fails to disclose these features because Bauer fails to disclose any structure that is below the substrate member 26 and the foamed plastic 34 (i.e., the upper door 20 and the lower door 22).


Bauer also fails to disclose a door hinge portion protecting plate that is separate from the air bag door portion, as recited in claim 1, and a force concentrating means that is separate from the air bag door portion, as recited in claim 2, because Bauer fails to disclose separate features. In other words, the substrate member 26 is not separate from the foamed plastic 36.

Accordingly Bauer fails to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in claims 1 and 2, as well as the additional features recited in the dependent claims. It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-5 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,


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